DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 247 657 EA 017 046

AUTHOR Downing, Clinton R.
TITLE Enhancing the Elementary School Assistant Principalship: Some Findings from Research.
PUB DATE 15 Nov 83
NOTE 10p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Southern Regional Council on Educational Administration (Knoxville, TN, November 13-15, 1983).
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Administrative Organization; *Assistant Principals; Elementary Education; *Occupational Information; Principals; *Recognition (Achievement); Salaries; Skill Development; *State Surveys

ABSTRACT

Research on 125 assistant elementary principals in North Carolina revealed seven concerns about performance of duties: (1) lack of a well-defined job description, (2) lack of authority to implement assigned tasks, (3) lack of involvement in the instructional process, (4) lack of recognition, (5) make-shift office space, (6) low salaries, and (7) discrepancies between female and male assistant principal expectations. After analyses of these concerns, the study offers 10 recommendations as "skill builders" for use by principals concerned with the effective use of assistant principals. Involvement in every aspect of the school's administration is important for full realization of the assistant principal's potential. (MD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Clinton R. Downing

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

FA

ED247657

ENHANCING THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ASSISTANT PRINCIPALSHIP: SOME FINDINGS FROM RESEARCH

Presented by

Dr. Clinton R. Downing

Associate Professor of Education

East Carolina University

Greenville, North Carolina

at the

Southern Regional Council on Educational Administration Annual Meeting

November 15, 1983

Knoxville, Tennessee

EA 017 046

ENHANCING THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ASSISTANT PRINCIPALSHIP:

SOME FINDINGS FROM RESEARCH

Introduction

An important task for the elementary principal to consider is to disseminate to the public the value of an assistant elementary principal who will aid in improving the quality of education. We must dispel the idea that the only purpose for establishing the position of assistant principal in elementary schools is to relieve the principal of time-consuming tasks. It is essential that we promote the importance of the elementary assistant principal in the improvement of instruction in the school.

Much has been written about salary schedules and contracts for employment. What is needed is more research on preparing and selecting the elementary assistant principal, elementary principal - assistant principal relations, the role of the assistant principal in elementary schools, and the value of the elementary assistant principal. This type information would help elementary assistant principals in understanding their complicated, often ambiguous roles; moreover, such literary attention would help the elementary principal to fully appreciate, understand, and utilize this new helper in a productive way.

BEST COPY

Concerns for the Job

There is no doubt as to the importance of the elementary school assistant principalship. What, then, can be done to enhance its character, to make it a pleasant and rewarding position? Answers to this question were sought by the writer through a study involving assistant principals in elementary schools in eastern North Carolina. The results of this study involving 125 elementary and junior high - middle schools assistant principals in 40 school districts identified concerns elementary school assistant principals have in performing their duties. The concerns, by and large, are derived from tasks assigned by the principal and are as follows:

1. Lack Of Involvement In Preparing A Well Defined Job Description That Will Lead Toward Professional Advancement

   Ninety-eight percent of the assistant principals surveyed were not involved in developing a description for the job. Many of these, in fact, were working without a job description.

2. Administrative Constraints In Implementing Assigned Tasks

   Having the responsibility, but not the authority to implement assigned tasks placed the assistant principal in an awkward position.

3. Lack Of Involvement In The Total Instructional Process

   A majority of the assistant principals responding to the survey listed buses, books, and discipline as their major assignments. While these respondents generally accept the assignment of discipline, they feel that the vast amount of recordkeeping and reports associated with buses and books are clerical in nature and could be handled by a competent secretary. This would free the assistant principal to become involved in leadership activities (evaluating staff; curriculum development; community relations) that relate to improving instruction.

BEST COPY

4. Lack Of Recognition For Outstanding Work Performed And Achievements Accomplished

The assistant principal suffers a "let down" feeling when he/she is instrumental in solving a problem or initiating new ideas and the principal takes the credit in public forums or by written communication from the school board.

5. A Negative Attitude By Principals Toward The Assistant Principal's Comfort At The Work Place

Make-shift office space away from the administrative complex is a concern of several assistant principals surveyed. One respondent's office was set up in a corner of the cafeteria. When the principal was approached by the assistant principal, the response was "this is where you are needed." Insufficient secretarial help was mentioned frequently.

6. Salary Not Commensurate With Increased Work Load

There was a general feeling among the respondents that their supervisors have little interest in seeking monetary compensation for the assistant principal position. The fact that most assistant principals surveyed reported that they averaged a ten-hour day (7:00 a.m.- 5:00 p.m.) substantiate this concern. For all the effort put into the job, one assistant principal remarked that all he received was "a smile and a pat on the back."

7. A Clear Discrepancy In Job Expectations For Female And Male Assistant Principals

Ninety-eight percent of the female assistant principals responding to the survey were not involved in student discipline. Their job assignment was primarily instructional matters. A large percentage of their time was devoted to instructional tasks.

BEST COPY

The reverse was noted by male respondents. While a low percentage of males were assigned instructional duties, the majority was involved in student discipline and book custodian duties.

Both males and females responding to the survey desired more equality in jobs assigned. Ninety-nine percent of males surveyed viewed involvement in instructional improvement activities as a means for enhancing the elementary school assistant principalship.

These concerns have been analyzed and recommendations have been projected.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are offered as "skill builders" for the elementary principal who must be concerned with effective use of the assistant principal position. The elementary principal should:

1. Establish A Selection Process That Will Locate A Person Suitable For The Job

   Identify persons who demonstrate the ability, knowledge and strength to be good administrators.

   Seek a candidate whose qualities include a positive attitude toward work, emotional stability, knowledge of curriculum, ability to plan and organize well. He/she possesses a positive view of self, is tactful, maintains a pleasant speaking voice, and most of all has a concern for children.

   Professional factors to be considered are educational preparation, experience, and acquired skills.

   The assistant principal should have teaching experience, preferably at the elementary level, and should have studied administration and supervision.

BEST COPY

2. Involve The Assistant Principal In Formulating A Job Description That Will Promote Administrative Skill Development

Over ninety-five percent of assistant principals surveyed indicated that their major purpose for accepting the assistant principalship was to gain experience needed to prepare them for a principalship. When this is not reflected in the written document or promoted through practice, the assistant principal becomes concerned, frustrated, and eventually will become less effective.

Include the assistant principal in developing the job description, giving him/her the privilege to negotiate or even say "no" concerning some duties that may be irrelevant to administrative skill building.

3. Grant The Assistant Principal Freedom To Participate In The Decision-Making Process

A recognition that the assistant principalship is a professional position in the educational structure is a beginning.

Such recognition must be honest in its intent and purpose. It cannot be superficial.

4. Limit Imposed Administrative Constraints To Those That Are Essential

Be sure that the constraints applied will keep the assistant principal's actions within the legal framework of local, state, and national guidelines. You are the principal. You are responsible for the total school program. You must maintain control, therefore, imposing constraints is a must, but do not stifle creativity.

5. Relieve The Assistant Principal Of Assigned Duties And Functions That Are Negative and Punitive

Assigning the assistant principal duties such as full discipline responsibility and contacting parents only when their child must be punished places the assistant principal in an unfavorable position with

BEST COPY

students and the community. Assistant principals feel that they should be assigned tasks related to opportunities for the assistant principal to collaborate with the principal, classroom teachers, and instructional support personnel in the development of the total elementary school program.

6. Seek Local Monies To Supplement State Funds In Providing Extra Compensation For The Assistant Principal

The principal is in a unique position in which he/she can be instrumental in selling the assistant principal to the school board and the community. A good job of selling the value of the assistant principalship to the total school program should bring results when the budget is prepared. The principal is in a position to create a climate in which the assistant principal can be respected by all. The principal must let everyone know that "this is my assistant, and his/her words are my [illegible]."

7. Provide A Wholesome Work Environment For The Assistant Principal

You, as principal, are the person in charge. You, by your actions, may dictate the environment within which your assistant will perform. Essential to establishing and maintaining a proper environment is communication upward and downward.

Assistant principals surveyed indicated that lack of adequate office space was a cause for concern.

A separate office, adjoining the principal's office is desirable. If this is not feasible, space in close proximity to the principal's office should be provided. The office should give status to the assistant principal's position.

Provide adequate secretarial help for the assistant principal.

BEST COPY

8. Review The Assistant Principal's Assignments Periodically

As new responsibilities are acquired, it seems reasonable that other tasks might be re-assigned.

The aspiring administrator should be carried through problem areas that principals often encounter. The principal may have full control over this activity (free from possible restraints by the central office).

The assistant principal should not be left to find his/her own way. A training program designed by the principal will be helpful.

Short-term formal workshops provided by the central administrative unit are valuable in improving basic skills needed for the job. These activities will give the assistant principal confidence and will give him/her the feeling that others are concerned with his/her needs and aspirations.

9. Be Liberal With Praise For Excellent Work Performed

You, the principal, must work at helping your assistant feel good about himself/herself.

Let the school and community know you support the assistant principal and are appreciative of his/her administrative skills and leadership abilities.

Give credit where credit is due. This will provide motivation for the assistant principal to continue to seek creative solutions to problems.

10. Share Power With The Assistant Principal

Let the assistant principal know that you, as leader in the school, respect his/her judgment and have faith in his/her abilities. Let your assistant principal shine. Reward the assistant publicly for work well done.

BEST COPY

Constantly seek new roles for the assistant principal, freeing him/her from whatever stigma that may be associated with actions as chief disciplinarian for the school.

The assistant principal must be relieved from the plight of having to fantasize about power; the position must be given power from within. For you, the top-administrator, this is most important.

The foregoing suggestions will be helpful in enhancing the elementary school assistant principalship. The task is to recognize the needs of assistant principals; the challenge is to take measures to alleviate these needs.

Summary

The assistant principal is an extension of the principal for whom he/she works. Therefore, the assistant principal must be involved in every aspect of the administration. To limit the assistant principalship to just one aspect of administration such as discipline or busing cripples the school, the principal, and the assistant.

The assistant principal should become a filter or vent through which administrative policy is executed and staff and student concerns are heard. If this filter is clogged, with unnecessary "duty debris," all entities of the educational enterprise lose.

The assistant principalship is generally thought of as a stepping stone to a principalship. However, it is, perhaps, time that the assistant principalship be developed as a career goal in itself.

BEST COPY